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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ocean 180 Video Challenge Announces Finalists, Students Prepare to Pick Winners!

Over 42,000 middle school students from around the world will judge scientists' ability to share their discoveries through video; top three films to win \$6,000 in prizes.

MELBOURNE, FL- Scientists are constantly exploring, conducting exciting and groundbreaking research that addresses many of world's greatest challenges. Yet, often the importance and implications of their discoveries are never shared with the public.

Recognizing the need for scientists to communicate more effectively with the general public, the inaugural Ocean 180 Video Challenge asked ocean scientists to explain their research to middle school students. Sound easy? How about in 180 seconds or less?

Sponsored by the Florida Center for Ocean Science Education Excellence (COSEE Florida) and funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation, the Ocean 180 Video Challenge was designed to inspire scientists to communicate the meaning and significance of scientific research with a broader audience.

"This competition came at just the right time. The growth of online video is tremendous. Its reach is global and its potential for scientific outreach is huge," said Ocean 180 finalist Dr. Joseph Pawlik, professor of biology and marine biology at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. His film, based on research of sponges on Caribbean coral reefs, is funded by the National Science Foundation.

Scientists from across the country took on the challenge, sharing their recently published research in 3 minute videos. The top 10 submissions were selected by a panel of science and communication experts. Now the finalists will be evaluated by middle school students, arguably one of the most critical audiences.

Over 42,000 students in 6-8th grade from all 50 US states and 13 countries will ultimately select the winners. Of the 480 teachers who have registered their classrooms as student judges, many are looking for a way to inspire students to view science as a potential career, not just a subject in school.

One teacher participating in Ocean 180 explained that "anytime students are exposed to real world science it broadens their minds and opens possible doors to future science careers."

Throughout January, over 1,800 middle school classrooms will be screening the videos and evaluating the communication skills of ocean scientists. These students are responsible for not only selecting the winners, but providing feedback and comments to the scientist. The opinions of the student judging team are taken very seriously, with winners of the Ocean 180 Video Challenge receiving up to \$6,000 in cash prizes.

“Ocean scientists who submitted films will ultimately have tens of thousands of students, some potential scientists, learning about their research,” said Mallory Watson, COSEE Florida Scientist and member of the organizing committee for Ocean 180. “Just as important, evaluations from students will be used to help scientists be better equipped to engage the general public in ocean science research.”

While registered middle school classrooms are participating as judges, the videos are available to the public. The top 10 video abstracts, along with team leaders and their institutional affiliations are listed below. Visit <http://ocean180.org> for a full list of team members, participating classrooms, and to view the finalists’ videos. Winners will be announced in late February.

Questions regarding the Ocean 180 Video Challenge may be directed to mwatson@fit.edu

Bite Size: Bull Shark Predation of Tarpon

Neil Hammerschlag, *University of Miami*

Erasing our Sunken Past

Michael Brennan, *University of Rhode Island*

Fishing in the deep: Observations of a deep-sea anglerfish

Lonny Lundsten, *Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute*

How a microscopic team alters the course of Carbon in the Atlantic Ocean

Laurence Yeung, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Innocence by Viral Tagging

Ann Gregory, *University of Arizona*

Sponges of the Caribbean: What ecological factors most affect them?

Joseph Pawlik, *University of North Carolina, Wilmington*

The Harp Sponge: An extraordinary new species of carnivorous sponge

Lonny Lundsten, *Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute*

Trash in the deep sea: Bringing a hidden problem to light

Kyra Schlining, *Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute*

Wavechasers and the Samoan Passage

Matthew Alford, *University of Washington*

What do lobster traps tell us about lobsters on the bottom?

Win Watson, Liz Morrissey, and Nate Copp, *University of New Hampshire*

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About COSEE Florida

COSEE Florida's mission is to spark and nurture collaborations among scientists and educators to promote ocean discovery and literacy, and to enhance the public's understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of the ocean. Visit us online at <http://www.coseeflorida.org>. COSEE Florida is funded through a National Science Foundation Grant through the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) Program.